

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

281646Z Oct 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 002947

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/RPM, EUR/UBI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NL](#) [AF](#) [MAAR](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/AFGHANISTAN: POTENTIAL DELAY ON ISAF
STAGE III DECISION

Classified By: Charge D'Affaires Andrew Schofer, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary/Comment: The Dutch government may delay its planned November 4 presentation to Cabinet on Dutch plans to participate in ISAF Stage III due to security concerns. A delay at this stage would mean a later debate in parliament, but would not necessarily push back the actual deployment. It is unclear at this point whether MOD or MFA is driving the delay, and both ministries reject Dutch press speculation that political in-fighting between the two ministers is responsible. Dutch officials -- both MFA and MOD -- continue to stress that the Dutch government is committed to Stage III regardless of whether the timing slips. The Dutch recognize the need to consult closely with Australia and other partners to minimize any negative repercussions from a delay in the decision-making process. End Summary/Comment.

Press Reports MOD-MFA Spat

12. (C) The Dutch newspaper Volkskrant carried October 27 an article alleging that the presentation to Cabinet of plans for Dutch participation in ISAF Stage III will be delayed beyond November 4 due to feuding between the Ministers of Defense (Kamp) and Foreign Affairs (Bot). The article speculated that senior MFA officials, including Bot, had serious misgiving about the proposed deployments due to the security situation in Uruzghan province. Although contacts in both the MOD and MFA denied the substance of this article, the Volkskrant and several other papers followed up October 28 with additional articles describing an ongoing dispute Bot and Kamp over Afghanistan and, more generally, over which ministry ultimately has responsibility for initiating military deployments.

MFA -- MOD Needs To Finish Its Work

13. (C) MFA Director of Security Policy Robert de Groot attended a October 28 meeting between Bot and Kamp at which Dutch plans for ISAF III were addressed. De Groot denied reports of a "power struggle" between Kamp and Bot, but confirmed to Polmiloff that there might be a delay in presenting the deployment plan to Cabinet because the MOD needs more time to "finish its work." The press reports, he stressed, were "completely unfounded and spurious," and the purported MFA position "could not be further from the truth." He added that the planned November 4 presentation date to Cabinet was "fabricated by the press". (Note: Emboffs have been told by numerous Dutch government officials that November 4 was the planned date of the presentation. End note.) De Groot said the decision will be taken in due course, and in favor of the deployment.

14. (C) In a discussion with Charge on October 28, MFA Deputy Political Director Peter de Gooijer declined detailed comment on the potential delay. He noted that the original plan was for Bot and Kamp to present the Stage III proposal to Cabinet following Kamp's return from Afghanistan -- his visit would provide "depth and color" to bolster Cabinet members' confidence in favor of the Stage III deployment. He added that any possible delay would require close consultations with the Australians to preserve a possible Dutch-Australian partnership in Uruzghan. (Note: De Gooijer led the high-level delegation to Canberra last week to discuss partnering in Uruzghan, and will accompany Kamp to Afghanistan next week. End note.)

MOD -- Strange Press Reports, But Some Truth

15. (C) MOD Senior Policy Advisor Maarten van Meurs told Polmiloff October 28 that the articles were off-base, but contained an "element of truth". He said that there should be "absolutely no question" that the Dutch are committed to participating in ISAF Stage III. However, he added that Kamp -- and not Bot -- had requested more time for a reassessment of the security situation on the ground in Uruzghan. This may delay a Cabinet decision on Stage III participation by several weeks, van Meurs said. It will also require close

consultations with Dutch Allies, including specifically the USG and Australia. He also noted that the broader rivalry between Kamp and Bot alleged in the press was "not far from the truth". The MOD has tried to consult with the MFA on Afghanistan and the acquisition of new weapons systems like TACTOM, he said, but there is a perception in the MFA that Kamp is "stepping on Bot's toes," and "trying to acquire new toys".

16. (C) MOD Director for General Policy Affairs Lo Casteleijn described the articles as "very strange" and "off-base," and expected statements by Prime Minister Jean-Peter Balkenende and FM Bot refuting the reports. Casteleijn further declined to comment on the possibility of delaying a Cabinet decision on ISAF Stage III participation. (Note: Casteleijn has always been forthcoming; his reluctance to talk is perhaps indicative of the turbulent state of play. End note.)

Comment: Committed but Cautious

17. (C) The Dutch government wants to participate in Stage III, and is doing everything possible to make it happen with the broadest possible political support. This includes some "spin-doctoring" to convince us that they are committed despite the potential delay, as indicated by our inability to get a straight answer on the actual state of play in Cabinet. It does appear that the MOD is slowing an already slow-moving train, but it is also possible that Kamp could return from Afghanistan convinced of the need to immediately present the Stage III plans to Cabinet. The MFA, meanwhile, appears to be living up to its promises to the Australian government by pushing the November 4 presentation to Cabinet. The Dutch are clearly aware that any complications in their proposed timeline will require some intense consultations with Canberra -- and us -- to ensure that the potential partnership does not unravel. End comment.

SCHOFER